

**State Board of Education
May 18, 2010
Item I**

Team: Research, Standards and Assessment

Discussion/Update Topic: RTTT Comprehensive Assessment Systems RFP

Alignment with Goals:

Goal I: Support high-quality innovative instruction to improve student achievement. Objective B: A statewide accountability system identifying student needs related to achievement.

Statutory Authority: 16 V.S.A. §164 (9)

Background Information:

USED has made available 320 million dollars to fund 1-2 (up to 160 million each) state consortia to develop a Comprehensive Assessment System. Vermont is currently participating in the Smarter Balanced Consortia with 32 other states. The proposal is due June 23rd and awards will be made by the end of September 2010. The summative component of this system must be operational in 2014-2015.

Purpose of Discussion:

Discussion in preparation for the SBE chair to sign the Memorandum of Understanding to be submitted with the application in June.

Cost Implications:

Development costs for the new assessment system will be funded from the RTTT grant; however, operational costs are expected to be funded from the assessment grants currently funding state assessment (NECAP, etc.). USED has indicated that these grants could increase. The system proposed by Smarter Balanced will be more authentic, provide a balance of formative, interim and summative assessment, strengthen the connections between instruction and assessment, and collect longitudinal evidence of student learning against college and career readiness. This system, however, is dependent on adoption of the Common Core Standards and will require significant commitment to professional development and meaningful assessment on an ongoing basis from teachers and administrators that is necessary to result in improved outcomes for all students.

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Frequently Asked Questions: Vermont's Participation in the Race to the Top Assessment Competition

What is the Race to the Top (RttT) Assessment Competition?

Funds are being made available by USED to state consortia in two competition categories:

- **Category A: Comprehensive Assessment Systems**
 - Support assessment systems (summative, interim, formative, scoring/moderation, professional development)
 - Support federal accountability – replace current ESEA assessments
 - Administered, at a minimum, annually in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school to determine whether individual students are college and career-ready or are on track to being college and career ready
 - \$320M; 1-2 awards of up to \$160M
- **Category B: High School Course Assessment Program**
 - Support high school improvement efforts
 - Increase access to rigorous courses
 - Support diverse course offerings (academic, career/technical)
 - No federal accountability “stakes”
 - \$30M; 1 award

What are the absolute priorities a consortium must meet in order to receive a grant for Category a Comprehensive Assessment Systems?

The new systems must:

- be used by multiple states (minimum of 15 to apply)
- be valid, reliable, and fair for their intended purposes and for all student subgroups
- measure student knowledge and skills against a common set of college and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts that:
 - covers full range of standards, including those traditionally difficult to measure
 - elicits complex student demonstrations or applications of knowledge and skills
 - provides measure of achievement across full performance continuum, including high and low achieving students
 - provides accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course
- assess all students, including English learners and students with disabilities (all but 1%)
- produce data (student achievement and student growth) that can inform:
 - determinations of school effectiveness for purposes of accountability under Title I of ESEA
 - determinations of individual principal and teacher effectiveness for purposes of evaluation
 - determinations of principal and teacher professional development and support needs
 - teaching, learning, and program improvement

What are some critical timelines for Category A: Comprehensive Assessment Systems?

- June 23, 2010: Applications Due
- September 2010: Awards made
- SY2014-2015: Summative Assessment Components fully implemented in each state

How is Vermont participating in Category A: Comprehensive Assessment Systems?

Vermont is a governing member of the SMARTER BALANCED consortium which is a combination of three consortia: MOSIAC, SMARTER and the BALANCED ASSESSMENT CONSORTIA. The consortium submitted its Intent to Apply for the RttT Assessment funds on April 27th. As of May 5th, **33** states have committed to the consortium as either governing or participating states. Governing states may only join one consortium but participating states may join more than one consortium. Applicants must have at least 5 governing states. Governing states act in an advisory capacity and carry significant weight in setting the direction for development and implementation.

What are the principles guiding the work of the SMARTER BALANCED assessment consortium?

Each of the following nine principles is a necessary element of the “SMARTER BALANCED” assessment consortium. The consortium is firmly committed to the development of an assessment system that is state led and that provides:

1. A variety of item types, including performance assessments and performance-based constructed response items;
2. A means to scale up over time to incorporate curriculum-embedded performance assessments and complex computer based simulations;
3. Online adaptive solutions for summative and interim assessments, meeting the assessment needs of all students;
4. A structure for states to transition to online adaptive assessments;
5. A systematic solution to informed decision-making by including formative strategies, benchmark/interim assessments, and summative assessments;
6. High quality instructional and student learning supports to support teachers;
7. Access for broad inclusion of teachers in the design, development and implementation of all aspects of the assessment system; ;
8. Assessments that are designed and implemented to adhere to professional quality standards and that are guided by the principles of universal design to ensure accurate and valid measures of the performance of **all** students; and
9. Optional components that states can use based on their needs.

How is Vermont participating in Category B: High School Course Assessment Program?

Vermont is participating in The National Center for Education and the Economy’s (NCEE) Board Examination Consortium. This effort is led by Marc Tucker from the Center and will result in support for 10-20 Vermont schools to voluntarily participate in a demonstration project to implement one of several board examination systems. Choices range from the International Baccalaureate to ACT Core. These systems are leveled and provide course syllabi, professional development for teachers and assessments for students. Upon successful completion of an assessment, typically at end of 10th grade, students could qualify to enter an open-admissions college with no need for remedial coursework or continue in a rigorous high school or career academy. The timeline for submission is the same as for Category A.